

Duxbury's Religious Legacy

By THE REV. CANON ROBERT MERRY

"The spring now approaching it pleased God that mortality began to cease among us and the sick and lame recovered apace, which put as it were new life into them, though they had borne their sad affliction with such patience and contentedness as I think any people could do. But it was the Lord which upheld them and had before hand prepared them many having borne the yoke, yea from their youth."

So wrote William Bradford as quoted by Samuel Eliot Morrison in his book, *OF THE PLYMOUTH PLANTATION*. He was reporting on the first winter after the Pilgrims' landing in Plymouth, and in other information said that in those really rough months half of the colony died, and at times only 6 or 7 were able to minister to the remainder who survived. And then to climax the event no one left to go back on the Mayflower when it returned that following spring. The tourist viewing the austere living conditions displayed today at Plimoth Plantation would also reach one definite conclusion as to the Pilgrim's (and hence Duxbury's) religious legacy and that was a tenacious faith in God and His People. Absolutely nothing else could account for the success of the enterprise.

For the purposes of this essay I am including Duxbury's legacy with that of Plymouth as they were both part of the same colony, but at the outset I feel bound to make a distinction between the Pilgrims and Puritans. The Pilgrims were "Separatists," holding themselves apart from the Established Church completely. They broke with the Establishment and even migrated to Holland where they had heard of the religious liberty finally achieved in that strife-torn country. They remained here 15 years acting under the sponsorship of Elder William Brewster, who had come to admire the Dutch when he served Queen Elizabeth as assistant to her secretary there. The Puritans were a different breed entirely religiously speaking; they remained in the Church of England intent on "purifying" it by removing what they considered "papist" accretions in ritual and ceremonial. (Among their efforts were the elimination of the sign of the Cross in Holy Baptism, the ring in the wedding ceremony and the celebration of Christmas.) They were "High Churchmen," holding the belief that the clergy held the lives of church members under their absolute control. Herein lay the dangers as we note in the treatment of "witches" in Salem. Some confusion has been created in the history books because of the strong recommendation of Richard and Cotton Mather Puritan Boston took control of the entire Massachusetts Bay colony in 1630.



First Parish Church

government's trouble and "disturbance." The Pilgrims left Roger to make his own decision, which he did and then after exile from Salem founded the American Baptist Church in Providence. There is no record that the Pilgrims exhibited the intolerance that overcame the Puritans. Nor is there any reference to any persecution of dissenters. Was this distinctive quality of the Pilgrims acquired from their 15 years sojourn in the one country in the world who had established religious liberty as a cornerstone of political life? I think it is safe to make such an assumption. Not that the Duxburyites lacked discipline in their life and worship; there were "readings" at Town Meeting bringing people into humiliating censure and stocks were used on occasion but there were never any torturings or burnings as in Salem. It appears that the Pilgrims obeyed the admonition of the Papal Encyclical of 3 centuries later; I quote from memory: "Although error has no rights in the face of truth, the person who is in error does, and is to be treated at all times as a fellow man."

ch" "gathered" in 1632 and continued in the present Unitarian Church. Duxburyites had wearied of the weekly trek to Plymouth (except in winter when they all returned there) for worship and built their first "meeting house" on what is now Chestnut St. next to the "Old Burying Ground." A second building, the first being outgrown was built on the same site in 1706. On Feb. 2, 1784, the "town" voted to build a more impressive structure on Tremont St. next to Mayflower Cemetery. This remained the center for community worship and other community activities in Duxbury until 1840, when the prosperity of the ship-building days enabled them to put up the present beautiful edifice that stands on this spot today. Unused lumber from the old building found its way into the construction of the Bittering cottage a few yards down the street.

Duxbury continued as a community of combined church and town meeting center for the next several years on this location when the town terminated its tax support in 1827.

Research in the Duxbury Room of the library and reading the "Story of Duxbury, Massachusetts 1637-1937," have given me many delightful insights into the lives of outstanding people, and especially our ministers in the past who have made contributions to Duxbury's religious legacy, but it would take many more pages than this essay to do justice to them. I will mention only 2 outstanding laymen, Elder William Brewster and George Partridge and one clergyman Josiah Moore. Elder Brewster was the sponsor of the sojourn in Holland, and the guide and counsellor of the Pilgrim band all his long life. George Partridge lived in the restless times before and after the Revolution, voting for George Washington as President and serving in the Continental Congress. Josiah Moore's pastorate began in 1834 and continued till his death in 1881. He presided over the church from the approaching peak of Duxbury's prosperity on through the decline in ship-building, into the trials and sacrifices of the Civil War and on through the dismal years of the town's lowest material ebb since colonial times.

Many churches have lent their influence in Duxbury's religious legacy. First after the "First Parish Church" were the Methodists, to whom Seth Sprague gave the land and building now used by St. John's Episcopal Church. Controversy over slavery and temperance caused a break in the fellowship and Seth Sprague and 58 other church members moved out front onto Washington St. and built a new church in 1844. Methodists then moved to Ashdod and later (1868) built their present church in West Duxbury. It was Seth Sprague's granddaughter (Lucy Sprague Sampson) who bought the now vacant old church and gave it to the Episcopalians then worshipping in homes and halls since 1884. The new congregation affiliated with the "Congregational

and ever since that time this important distinction has been obscured.

I spotlight it here because another aspect of our religious legacy depends on it. This is evidenced by 3 things, an event, a conjecture and a doctrine. The event is the buying and paying for and securing a deed for the land Duxbury occupied, then named "Mattakeeset" by the Indians. This is the first recorded purchase and payment for land in New England and receipt of a deed from a chief, in this instance Massasoit. The deed itself is in the files of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society; a photostat of it hangs on the wall of the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society Museum in the King Caesar House. It is a remarkable fact that while the pillaging and plundering of the New World was proceeding apace all around them the Pilgrims in Duxbury were respecting the rights of their new friends as fellow human beings.

The Duxbury Pilgrims were peacemakers and records of the little colony show (as Dorothy Wentworth details in her book *THE ALDEN FAMILY*) how John Alden made many journeys to settle disputes among Indian tribes and between settlers and Indians on Cape Cod and as far up the coast as the Kennebec River in Maine. Gershom Bradford makes the plausible conjecture in his booklet on the history of The First Parish Church that Pilgrims were instrumental in settling a dispute with the Dutch issuing in the "Treaty of Hartford" in 1650. The Dutch, having established a foothold in New York (then New Amsterdam) had moved into Connecticut and built a fort in Winsor in 1633. Thomas Hooker, having migrated from Newtowne (now Cambridge) with almost the entire populace who were fed up with the strictures of Puritan living, had settled nearby and contested the area with the Dutch. What more natural human recourse for reconciliation than these people who knew and appreciated the Dutch, spoke their language and had enjoyed living with them for 15 years?

I speak of a "doctrine" because it was the belief among the Pilgrims that maximum human tolerance (doubtless gained from their living in Holland) should be given to dissenters. A case in point was their treatment of Roger Williams. I quote from William Bradford: "He this year began to fall into some strange opinions and from opinion to practice, which caused some controversy between the church and him, (requiring him) to leave abruptly after some discussion suing for his dismission to the church in Salem, which was granted with some caution to them concerning him and what they ought to have of him. But he soon fell into more things there both to their

being equal to all others before the Law of God." Pilgrims were a gentle folk and came to this land fresh from the ostracism and persecutions at the hands of the King's police in Scrooby, and had no desire to inflict on others the kind of treatment they themselves had suffered. They lived openly in the fear and love of God and held all others likewise to be God's people and entitled to their respect. This doctrine of the equality of all men before God was enshrined in the Mayflower Compact and became the cornerstone of our American democracy. It is this double principle of the faith in God and faith in human nature "made in His Image" I believe to be the religious legacy of Duxbury.

It is not easy for us ourselves in the religious milieu of the early Pilgrims. First there was no "separation of church and state." This would come only after 200 years from the settlement of Duxbury, i.e., in 1828. Duxbury was seen as the perfect embodiment of the Divine Community, the Holy People of God where there was no distinction of "secular and sacred." A single body of faithful people dedicated to God and to one another, at Worship on Sunday, and at work on weekdays, meeting to decide community issues in the one house for all purposes, daily Bible readings in the family at home. No discussions took place of "religion and politics," for it was all one and the same. There was strictly speaking no "church" in the institutional sense apart from the community of people at all, and yet it was "all church." All life was seen as the gift of God and nature as His Mantle. Man's duty was regarded as a response to the initial gifts of God. Pilgrims had known the "church" as a political weapon oppressing the genuine worshippers of the one true God. Their "church" was seen as those coming together in the name of Christ who said, "For wherever 2 or 3 are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew: 18:20). Hence the importance of the word "gathered" in describing early New England churches. Wherever people dedicated to Christ came together, God "touched down" so to speak among them with no recourse to Bishop or priest or prince or prelate of any type.

It was this concept of human polity that gave birth to what we know today as the "New England Town Meeting," a governing body unique to New England. And it is important to note that in its origins it was a "theocracy," a "government by God," with meetings held in the same building as divine worship itself. It is the preservation in whatever residual state of this double thrust that is Duxbury's religious legacy. Its specifically religious loyalty has been transmitted down over the years by our churches.

Actually for the first 200 years it was one "church"

and adopted the name "Pilgrim" in 1873, replacing the earlier designation as the "Wesleyan Congregational Church." It was this church where I was baptized and enjoyed my early religious training. Roman Catholics began worship informally around 1902, served by a priest from Plymouth, later moving to Mattakeeset Hall on Washington St. They worshipped here from 1904 to 1943. The present Holy Family Church at the junction of St. George and Cedar streets was consecrated in 1936. Episcopalians held worship services in the summer, and became a fully self-supporting parish during the rectorship of The Rev. John Philbrick (1940-1949). Many Baptists and Nazarenes lived in Duxbury, but it was not until 1958 that the former were organized, their present building being constructed in 1969. The Church of the Nazarene on Kings Town Way in West Duxbury is the successor to an independent congregation in existence for many years, and dates its organization at 1950. The Christian Science Church rented Island Creek Hall for several years. It was given to them in 1952. A reading room was opened on Railroad Ave. in 1979. St. Margaret's Convent, an Episcopal Order for Women, began coming to South Duxbury around the turn of the century. I remember well delivering milk from our North Hill farm to the camp for girls they sponsored. Their chapel has been used as a summer worship facility by many Duxbury residents.

Such among others have been the guardians of what I've chosen to call Duxbury's religious legacy. But to get an update on the contemporary religious situation I accepted an invitation to a monthly meeting of the Duxbury Ministerial Association, to whom I put the general question, "Is there anything of remarkable nature going on in our religious Community? Are there signs of renewal and revival? Are more people going to church? Is God being taken more seriously now-a-day?"

Answers to this general probing interested and reassured me very much. The Rev. Daniel Deweese of The Church of the Nazarene said people's attitudes are changing from living by a set of rules to seeking out accepting relationships. That people were now impatient at hearing "about" God and wanting to know God. The Rev. Stephen Turrell of Pilgrim Church said he had observed a new religious impetus with the charismatic renewal; that this renewal was often accompanied by divisiveness in churches, but much good had been done by it. Fr. Lewis Mills of St. John's spoke of a kindled interest in Bible study groups and a renewed interest in church, but was waiting for clearer evidence that it reached beyond the walls of the church. All seemed to be concerned about the genuineness of the renewal. Fr. Turke of Holy Family Church mentioned a real renewal

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movement in the Catholic Church under the heading of "Spiritual Growth." The Rev. Robert Walsh of the Unitarian Church agreed that there was a new interest in church attendance, and especially in liturgical studies in his church. He had recently held a Communion Service in the Unitarian Church chapel in which 40 people took part.

My final question was whether there was evidence that the churches were drawing together. "Is Christian unity any nearer than it was, say, a decade ago?" To this the answer was hesitant. The Rev. Walsh said he felt there was great value in diversity — pluralism — Fr. Mills said and most agreed that there was a deepening of religious life, that our several "church wells" in the last analysis draw from the same stream. Fr. Turke climaxed our discussion by quoting a Cardinal at the Vatican who said, "The first 1,000 years the church was uniting, the second 1,000 years it was dividing, the 3rd thousand years it is again uniting."

The Real Mother's Day

By NANCY McCAFFERTY

I called my mother who lives in Ohio on Mother's Day. "What's new and exciting?" I asked. "Certainly not your father," she said. "Did you do anything special for Mother's Day?" I asked. "Well, I had 2 choices — one was to attend the grand opening of a supermarket and the other was to take Grandma out for dinner. I opted for the dinner. My mother can make me feel so guilty."

"Yes, I know," I said. "Where did you go?"

"We went to a revolving restaurant atop a circular hotel," she said. "It had a view of the river and the city lights. It was lovely. Grandma said she was sure it would make her seasick."

"She was all right, wasn't she?" I asked.

"She was fine. I'm not too sure about me. The place was very crowded, although that really didn't bother me until people began to line up behind my chair and tell me to chew faster."

"Wasn't your waiter efficient?" I asked.

"I couldn't say. He came to the table so infrequently that I forgot what he looked like," she said.

"What did Grandma have to say about that?"

"She thought we should have stayed home and eaten there, but I just didn't want to fix a meal for all those people on Mother's Day."

"What people?" I asked.

"Well," she said, "if you have Grandma, you have to have her friend Mary whom she wouldn't dream of leaving alone on Mother's Day. And then there is Uncle Bob and his wife Doris and their children."

not being invited," I said.

"I know, but Grandma would have. The view from the restaurant was really spectacular," she continued. "Grandma wondered if she would be able to see people being mugged. There was a 3-piece combo playing near our table and every time we raised a hand to summon the waiter, they thought it was a request and came over to ask the name of the song we wanted to hear. When they asked your father what he would like them to play he said, 'Far Away.' Grandma was horrified."

"It wasn't that bad, was it?" I said.

"No, not until she couldn't find her purse," she said.

"What happened?"

"Grandma had put her purse down on the revolving part of the restaurant and when it was time to leave, the purse was nowhere in sight. Your father and I began to circle the room, excusing ourselves a thousand times for leaning over tables and bumping into the diners at the window tables in our search for the purse. People were very kind after we explained what had happened and started to help us look for it. It threw the place into an uproar. Finally a 9-year-old boy found the purse and returned it to Grandma. She opened it and gave him a dollar reward. He was delighted and Grandma became a '10' in the eyes of all who saw her do it."

"We took her home about 10 and as we walked into the lobby, Grandma met a friend who listened to her tell about the marvelous dinner she had just had with her considerate daughter and attentive son-in-law."

"I guess it all works out in the end," I said.

"I guess it does," she answered. And I thought I heard her laugh.

Pancakes for Breakfast

By BOBBIE CUTLER

Many Duxbury families enjoyed the Kiwanis Mother's Day pancake breakfast. Kiwanians have perfected the cooking of pancakes so that every one is a uniform size. Oozing with butter, drowning in syrup, they go down fast and you can have as many as you please to go along with a sausage, a choice of juice and coffee or milk. The profits go for all the good causes that Kiwanians are known for.

Breakfast is about my favorite meal. It is fun to reach into the fridge and pull out some leftovers, cold steak, cold clam chowder, asparagus, Brussels sprouts with a dab of mayonnaise or a piece of toast with cheese or peanut butter. The morning Boston Globe had a piece on Jane Brody, nutrition writer for the New York Times. She gives her boys pizza for breakfast and she herself tends to eat leftovers rather than a traditional breakfast.

of a meal. I like to eat wandering about the house, looking out the windows at new fallen snow or budding trees and in the spring or summer take breakfast in hand and go outdoors in the dawning light to watch the sun rise and the birds saying good morning to each other.

The other day we had occasion to "eat out" for breakfast. We went to a well-known chain restaurant in a nearby town and sat down at the counter. The menu was extensive with many specials and exciting to choose from. I chose No. 1 and said I'd like my egg soft boiled. "No boiled eggs," said the waitress. "All right, fried and over gently." When my breakfast came, the egg was cooked as ordered, the buttered toast was unbuttered and on the side of the plate so that I had to carefully lift the egg to put it on a piece of toast.

After much delay, John's breakfast came. Two poached eggs which looked rubbery on English muffins or rather to the side of the muffins. The waitress disappeared. About 10 minutes later she returned and I said, "Where are my breakfast potatoes?" She said she didn't know I wanted any. I pointed to No. 1 on the menu. "It says here one egg, potato and buttered toast."

"You have 2 eggs and no potato," said she.

"Two eggs?" I said. "Strange that one of them has no yolk. Must be a weird chicken who lays a yolkless egg. And where is my husband's orange juice?"

By that time it was too late for potatoes and John kept telling me to be quiet. The coffee was good and plentiful. As we left, John said, "I gave her an extra tip because you were so rude."

So back to breakfasting on leftovers from last night's dinner. At least I can have what I want and when and I can look forward to next year's Pancake Breakfast.

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